United Nations E/ICEF/2000/NGO/1

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 May 2000
English
Original: French

*For information*

**United Nations Children's Fund**
**Executive Board**
**Annual session 2000**
22-26 May 2000

## Statement by the World Association of Children's Friends (AMADE)

Children are not "virtual". They suffer, they love, they hope. All our scientific progress, electronic devices, the Internet and digital signals cannot replace the generous gift of a mother's breast. No sensitive-nosed smart missile can take the place of a father's hand guiding his child on the paths of life.

Modernity has not changed the hopes that children place in us, the adults responsible for their fate. The greater the number of sophisticated innovations, the more we need to get back to direct contact. As a Vietnamese wise man once said, "Only he who has nothing to say is afraid of simplicity".

The World Association of Children's Friends (AMADE), which was established by H.R.H. Princess Grace and is headed by H.S.H. the Princess of Hanover, fully understands the need to avoid being sidetracked in its preventive efforts aimed at the protection of children.

For the past three years, we have been working in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Once alerted to the nutritional blindness that affects thousands of children in Benin, we decided to support the vitamin A distribution programme there. A simple, effective programme that did not involve multiple conferences, repetitive seminars and new studies by experts, it could hardly fail to interest us.

Children need vitamin A. We give it to them just by squeezing a capsule between our thumb and forefinger. Where there is ignorance of the fruits and vegetables that contain the precious vitamin, where there are poor eating habits, we explain, teach, convince and mobilize. This experience has been a rich one. The work done by the national and international United Nations field staff is exemplary. The people of Borgou and Atacora, the regions concerned, have responded as Africans know how to do; the women have taken charge of publicizing the issue of nutritional deficiency and have decided to "grow vitamin A" in kitchen gardens that are genuine havens of health amid the arid lands bordering on the Sahel.

00-45333 (E) 070600 140600

As we know, Africa, overwhelmed as it is with problems and, to speak frankly, misfortunes, invariably responds by facing them with strength, courage and dignity, especially when it is a question of protecting the children who are the most important members of society.

In light of the success of our Benin programme, we decided this year to extend our funding to Mali and the Niger. And this may be only the beginning! We would like UNICEF to help us to help it even better. In order to attract resources for the development of this project, now and in the future, we would like to receive as many informational materials as possible from the National Committees. In the Principality of Monaco, we play the role of those Committees by selling UNICEF greeting cards and publicizing our mutual projects in the media.

Madame/Mr. President, distinguished delegates, many non-governmental organizations, both small and large, want to become members of the UNICEF extended family. AMADE has taken this step with enthusiasm. We hope that UNICEF will link with us as closely as possible, especially with regard to the exchange of information that is indispensable to the continued coordination of our activities.

AMADE understands that as a new century begins, the protection of children remains a vehicle that can go far on an old-fashioned fuel. That fuel is hope; in French, the word is *espérance* and rhymes with *enfance*, the word for children. The UNICEF field staff know it well and often supplement it with an additive known as love of their work. We thank them and count on them.